



newsletter

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA)

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Eighteenth Session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA) opened its Eighteenth Session on Tuesday, 28 June 2016, in Palais des Nations in Geneva. The session started with a presentation by the Secretariat on outcomes from the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, in particular, noting the successful launch of the progress report on establishing a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in support of regular reporting and the Sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) for the pan-European Region (see below for more details). In the afternoon of the first day, interactive round-table discussions took place to address the need for a clear vision and road map for the Working Group. The purpose of the discussions was to jointly develop a vision and road map to define how WGEMA can contribute more effectively to enhancing environmental monitoring and assessment in the pan-European region, leading up to 2021. The results from these discussions will be shared with the Working Group in the coming weeks. Further, during the first day, representatives from Tajikistan and the Russian Federation presented ongoing work related to environmental monitoring and assessment.



During the second day, the continued review of SEIS establishment was discussed, more specifically, the session addressed how SEIS progress reporting could be improved. It was agreed that the annual SEIS progress reporting would need to be revisited, with the intent to integrate quality considerations as part of the assessment. It was also agreed that, following a presentation by a representative from Austria, the updated methodological approach would be piloted using air-quality indicators as part of developing the SEIS reporting application through UNEP live.

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The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA) was established in 2000 by the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) to serve as an instrument for UNECE Member States, to provide recommendations, propose action plans, and improve coordination of international initiatives concerned with environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting.

For more information on the areas of work of WGEMA visit:

<http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environmental-monitoring-and-assessment>

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The second day of the session also included two presentations on key findings and policy messages from the GEO-6, by representatives from Italy and the United Nations Environment Programme, as well as a presentation on the challenges in measuring progress on the SDGs by a representative from the United Nations Statistics Division. In the end, the Secretariat also recalled the Working Group's mandate to serve as a regional environmental information and assessment "network of networks", linking people and institutions dealing with thematic assessments or specific international agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

The noted reports and presentations can be found here:
<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42166#/>

Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

"Keeping the pan-European environment under review" was one of the main topics for an agenda item during the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial conference that took place in Batumi, Georgia on 8 June 2016.

Agenda item 2(b) focused on presenting the progress achieved in establishing a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS)

across the pan-European region, including country testimonials by several ECE ministers. This session was co-organised with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and included the launch of the pan-European regional assessment of the GEO-6) and an interesting panel discussion on the key messages of the assessment.

The session highlighted that SEIS is an approach that facilitates regular environmental reporting. That it helps to link existing data and information flows relevant for monitoring and assessment activities by means of information and communication technologies. SEIS advance the dissemination, application and comparability of environmental indicators and associated data sets, particularly the sharing and harmonisation of existing information networks and environmental monitoring requirements. The first SEIS progress report demonstrate that countries have improved online access to environmental data and information considerably, providing more information on the methodologies used for producing environmental data, how data is being used and its sources. Even more, the progress report shows that 32 of the 50 ECE countries included in the assessment increased the accessibility of their environmental information and data during the review period.



We are pleased to report that countries have committed to continue their efforts and to further develop their national information systems to have SEIS in place in the countries of Europe and Central Asia by 2021 through

the Batumi Ministerial Declaration "Greener, cleaner, smarter".

More information can be found here:
<http://www.unece.org/env/welcome.html>



Sixth Global Environmental Outlook (GEO-6) for the pan-European Region

Under the scope of the sixth edition of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6), the GEO-6 assessment for the pan-European region shows how environmental challenges are now more systemic, multifaceted, complex, and intertwined with socio-economic factors.

Launched by UNEP and UNECE on 8 June at the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial conference, the assessment identifies air pollution and climate change as now being the two major threats to human health in the pan-European region. Coupled with unhealthy lifestyles and the disconnection between society and natural environments, these not only affect human health but also give rise to new risks. Resource use in the region is also reaching unsustainable levels, owing to the overuse of natural resources.

“The GEO-6 assessment for the pan-European region - the first of its kind - highlights how the transition to an inclusive green economy in the region must build on resilient ecosystems, sound management of chemicals and clean production systems, and on healthy consumption choices” said Jan Dusik, Head of UNEP’s Regional Office for Europe. *“Greater cooperation and a more integrated approach are needed to tackle these transboundary challenges, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals”* he underlined. *“This report provides fresh information on the region’s emerging environmental issues and it will help governments shape their future policy”* said UNECE Executive Secretary Christian Friis Bach, underlining that *“UNECE multilateral environmental agreements and other instruments are effective tools to assist member States tackle many of these issues from air quality to water management to access to information, justice and public participation.”*

This assessment shows the need to pay close attention to early signals from science and society and invest in foresight processes to identify possible future risks, opportunities and conflicts. The implementation of a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in the

pan-European region, coupled with the findings of the GEO-6 regional assessment and of other assessment processes such as the European Environment Agency (EEA)’s European environment - state and outlook 2015 report (SOER 2015) provide the knowledge base for policy-makers to act on.



The GEO-6 report can be downloaded here:
<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42166#/>
(available in English and Russian).

Progress of OECD on developing Green Growth Indicators

Under the EU funded EaP GREEN project, the OECD has provided support to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Ukraine to develop green growth indicators at the national level and use them in country reports that can show progress in greening their economies. At the regional level, the report Measuring the Green Transformation of the Economy: A Guide to EaP Countries was prepared and discussed at the meeting of the UNECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators, 30 June-1 July 2016. This report provides guidance to EaP Green countries in applying and adapting the OECD framework for measuring progress towards green growth. It draws on lessons learned from the application of the green growth measurement framework and environmental indicators in OECD, European Union and EaP



countries and other transition economies of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

In parallel, the OECD measurement framework is also being applied in Kazakhstan to assess progress with the implementation of the Green Economy Concept in Kazakhstan adopted in 2013. A report on greening the Kazakh economy is expected to be prepared for the EXPO 2017 in Astana.



More information on green growth indicators under EaP GREEN can be found here:
<http://www.green-economies-eap.org/topics/greengrowthindicators/>

The European Union is funding a new phase of SEIS cooperation between the EEA and Eastern neighbours

On the 1st of February 2016, the European Environment Agency (EEA) started implementing phase II of the SEIS cooperation with its Eastern neighbours. The ENI SEIS II East project (*Implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System principles*

and practices in Eastern Partnership countries) covers the six Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) and will be carried out over 4-years, building on the cooperation established during the ENPI-SEIS project (*Towards a Shared Environmental Information System in the European Neighbourhood*), also implemented by the EEA between 2010 and 2015.

With the June 2016 Batumi Ministerial Declaration reiterating the need to *“have SEIS in place by 2021”*, this new cooperation on further SEIS implementation is aimed to help the countries find solutions to better respond to regional/international commitments related to environmental reporting; to improve their capacities to manage and use environmental statistics, data and information in support of decision-making; and prepare regular State-of-the-Environment-Reports (SoER) and indicator-based assessments. At national level, the project is coordinated by two National Focal Points (NFP), representing the Ministry of Environment and the National Bureau of Statistics respectively.

Bilateral level discussions with the partner countries are underway in view of developing national work plans. The first regional project Steering Committee meeting is planned for late November/early December (exact date and location remain to be confirmed). One of the key early objectives of the project is the set-up of adequate *“national SEIS implementation teams”* including the relevant counterparts to ensure national and regional coherence with the vast number of EU and UN-funded projects and initiatives related to the SEIS objectives. The project will focus on promoting similarities in approaches across the region, while helping the countries implement their national SEIS work plan based on their priorities.

The previous cooperation through the ENPI-SEIS project (2010-2015) had not emphasised strong linkages with the networks developing and using multi-purpose spatial data. The ENI SEIS II East project now includes an activity on land cover mapping to extend the well-established CORINE Land Cover (CLC) methodology. This is a step to facilitate the



access to, and use of, some spatial data required for SEIS implementation at national level. This activity allows direct links to the new Copernicus Programme, a joint European Union and European Space Agency initiative for a long term sustainable capacity building in Earth Observation from space.

A new project website is being developed:

<http://eni-seis.eionet.europa.eu/east>

The project is also registered in the EU Capacity for Development platform, where some information on the initial activities has already been uploaded:

<http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu>

For further information and details, please contact the project team at:

ENI-SEIS2@eea.europa.eu

Strengthening capacity for an environmental information management and monitoring system in Tajikistan

We are pleased to present the UNDP/GEF project “*Strengthening capacity for an environmental information management and monitoring system in Tajikistan*”, which started in October 2014, and was presented at the last Working Group meeting in Geneva. It is a three-year project that will run up until September 2017 and it is directly implemented by the UNDP Country Office, in close partnership with the major project counterparts, such as the Committee on Environmental Protection of Tajikistan.

The goal of this project is to deliver global environmental benefits by having better capacities and tools to monitor and measure progress in meeting Rio Convention obligations. The objective is to introduce a national integrated and coordinated environmental information management and monitoring system in Tajikistan.

Up-to-date, the project has purchased six sets of IT equipment that have been allocated to six regional centres, including the provision of

training on the use of the equipment. Several meetings with project partners have already taken place, focusing on carrying out a gap analysis, defining best practices on the management of environmental data and information as well as the identification of priorities for the establishment of monitoring system. Some reports have also been produced, such as a report on “*existing policies, strategies and action plans on management of environmental data and information in Tajikistan*”.

The implementation of recommendations made during the inception phase of the project starts this year and will focus on improving the functions of environmental monitoring in Tajikistan. This will include finalising and approving an initial list of environmental indicators to be monitored, designing forms, templates to collect the corresponding data, developing an environmental management information system. Once the new system is ready, it will be deployed to the six regional centres, which already have monitoring stations.

A presentation on the project is available here:

<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42166#/>

"Get your right to a healthy community" Second Subregional Workshop on the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia

19-21 September 2016, Minsk, Belarus

The second subregional workshop on the Protocol on PRTRs is organized by the secretariat of the UNECE Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) together with the secretariat of



the UNECE Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention) and in cooperation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus and its scientific and research center RUE “Bel SRC “Ecology”.

The three-day event will give participants the opportunity to share experiences gained through implementing PRTRs in different countries and how to use synergies with other instruments, in particular with the Air Convention and its protocols.

Through a range of specific thematic sessions, participants will find out how better to deal with the implementation of PRTRs at the national level as regards: (a) creating the appropriate institutional and legal frameworks; (b) developing the list of chemical substances and enterprises to be covered; (c) developing reporting requirements; (d) managing data and its dissemination; (e) foreseeing capacity building needs; and (f) promoting public awareness.

For more information on the workshop see: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=43077#/>

Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on the Implementation of SEEA

3-4 October 2016, Geneva, Switzerland.

The first Joint OECD/UNECE Seminar on the Implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) was held in Geneva in 2015. It was organised by a Committee composed of experts from Australia, Canada, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Sweden, the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), OECD and UNECE.

The second seminar will build upon the outcomes and recommendations of the first seminar and it will provide a forum to present and discuss the activities of international

organisations related to the implementation and the use of SEEA. The session will also consider SEEA and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), applications of SEEA data and their communication, and the implementation of SEEA modules.

For more information on the workshop: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41150#/>

Appointment of the Director of the Forests, Land and Housing Division

We are delighted to announce that Ms. Ivonne Higuero has been selected for the post as Director of the Forests, Land and Housing Division. Ivonne is well known in the UNECE as the Chief of the Operational Activities and Review Section in the Environment Division of UNECE, where among other tasks, she has been supervising the work of the Working Group. She has been serving the United Nations for more than 20 years in various capacities, focusing on issues related to sustainable natural resource management, including at UNEP where, most recently, she worked as ROE Programme Coordinator.



Even though she will be missed in the Environment Division, we are happy to congratulate Ms. Ivonne Higuero on her new appointment and wish her success as Director of the Forests, Land and Housing Division.



Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) Sub- Regional Workshop for Central Asian, Balkan and Caucuses countries

The objective of Cross-Cutting Capacity Development (CCCD) projects is to address important capacity needs that will enhance the ability of a country to meet obligations under international conventions by creating synergies, while at the same time, stimulating the introduction of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) into national policy, management or financial and legislative frameworks. To this end, CCCD projects focus on environmental governance systems and on mainstreaming global environmental issues into national development programs. Engaging in efforts to support capacity development needs to meet sustainable development objectives.



UNECE had the privilege to take part in the first CCCD Sub-Regional Workshop for Central Asian, Balkan and Caucuses countries that was organised for the CCCD member countries and experts in Almaty, Kazakhstan, between 14 and 16 September 2016.

The overall objective of the workshop was to share experiences and to engage the participants in a technical discussion, between countries, as well as to consider how CCCD

project implementation could be improved in the future. The important and strategic set of activities carried through CCCD projects share many priorities with the WGEMA, such as the ambition to make monitoring and assessment an effective instrument in environmental policymaking, and to improve international environmental reporting.

For more information on CCCD see:
http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/integrating_environmentintodevelopment/the-strategic-value-of-gef-cross-cutting-capacity-development.html

Upcoming Events

World Green Economy Summit (WGES) 2016

5-6 October 2016
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

World Mountain Forum 2016

17-20 October, 2016
Mbale, Eastern, Uganda

UNFCCC COP 22

7-18 November, 2016
Marrakesh, Marrakech, Morocco

Join Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators

17-18 November, 2016
Geneva, Switzerland

Budapest Water Summit 2016

28-30 November, 2016
Budapest, Hungary

Twenty-second session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy

25-27 January, 2017
Geneva, Switzerland

For more information about the Working Group, or this newsletter, please feel free to contact us via WGEMASec@unece.org.

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